Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 22 Number 5 May 2025

FIELD TRIP: Sunday, June 01, 2025, 6.00AM: Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. Meeting Point(s): Golden Palace Restaurant, Attapur, 05:30AM; Administrative Block entrance, 06:00AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Sudhir Moorti (Mobile: 96522-83335)

Nehru Zoological Park always makes for a rich birding experience with the adjacent green corridor of the National Police Academy and Mir Alam Tank. So please come and enjoy a Sunday outing. The natural habitats in the zoo support species like Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Black-rumped Flameback, Spotted Owlet, Yellow Bittern, Painted Stork, Shikra, Purple Heron, Grey Heron, Grey-bellied Cuckoo, Indian Grey Hornbill and many more.

This will be a half-day trip, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

BIRDING WHILE TREKKING IN NEPAL
Trip Report: Nepal, Apri 25 - May 03, 2025

Text & Photos: Dr Krishna Nagarajan

Annapurna South peak, taken from Ghorapani village

A trip to the mountains every summer has become a family tradition, and this year was no exception. My wife proposed Annapurna Mountain Range in Nepal and we all seconded her proposal. Our itinerary consisted of visiting Kathmandu, Lumbini, and Pokhara before hitting the trekking route in the Annapurna Mountain Range. We trekked a total of 42km over four days, with altitudes varying between 800m to 3200m, and camping in the villages of Ghorapani, Tadapani, and Ghandruk *en route*.

As always, I look forward to the opportunity to do some birding during these trekking trips. It keeps my mind away from all the pain and ache in the joints and muscles while mountain trekking. I usually look for birds early in the morning in and around the place we camp for the night. I also look for them during those brief 10-15 minute breaks while trekking. However, I do make sure that my bird watching activity does not intrude with others in the group who are more focused on trekking.

Kathmandu

Before this trip, my view of Kathmandu, Nepal was defined by the Hollywood movies. During my high school days, I remember watching Eddie Murphy's movie The Golden Child several times. More recently the Marvel movie Doctor Strange reinforced my views from childhood – that it is a cold, mystic place with Buddhist monks everywhere. And if you are lucky, some wise old monk may confer you with magical powers. In reality, the temperature in the valley was sweltering when we landed, and it felt like any other city or town in India – overcrowded and concrete everywhere – and no sign of Buddhist monks!

Common Myna

Oriental Magpie Robin

Rose-ringed Parakeet

Our hotel was located within the city limits but in a large open area. I stepped out early in the morning the next day with my binoculars and camera. I could only spot the usual city birds – Black Kite, Blue Rock Pigeon, Common Myna, House Sparrow, House Crow, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Long-tailed Shrike, Oriental Magpie Robin, Spotted Dove, Red-vented Bulbul, and Coppersmith Barbet.

I wrapped up quickly as we had plans to visit the local tourist spots, the Pashupathinath Temple, Boudha Stupa, and the famed Thamel market, before heading to the domestic airport for our next destination.

Lumbini

This is the birth place of Lord Buddha. The Mayadevi Temple, dedicated to Lord Buddha's mother, is actually an archaeological excavation site, where you walk right up to the place where Buddha was born. The temple along with the World Peace Pagoda has been beautifully developed. It was dusk and the whole place was lit up with thousands of butter candles by the pilgrims. We felt privileged and blessed to be there at that time of the day.

Jungle Babbler

Indian Treepie

We stayed at a resort nearby and I had a good feeling that I would be able to spot some interesting birds. As soon as I stepped out of my room the next morning, I spotted a few Jungle Babblers, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Rufous (now Indian) Treepie, and a pair of Spotted Owlets.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker

The Owlets were nodding their heads up and down, innocently staring at me with curiosity. I thanked them for staying still so that I could take some good pictures.

Spotted Owlet

Scaly-breasted Munia adult

Scaly-breasted Munia juvenile

I was fully awake and energized now, and started walking around slowly in the resort. I spotted the Asian Koel, Greater Coucal, Black Drongo, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Scaly-breasted Munia (adult and juvenile), Brahminy Starling, Cattle Egret, Red-wattled Lapwing, and a Crested Serpent Eagle.

Brahminy Starling

White-browed Wagtail

Also seen were Green Bee-eater, White-browed Wagtail, White-breasted Waterhen, Little Egret, Eurasian Collared Dove, Little Cormorant, Crimson Sunbird, and the Indian Pond Heron.

Eurasian Collared Dove

At a distance, I noticed a Pond Heron-shaped bird but black in colour. I could not recognize it, so I decided to approach carefully so that I can take a good picture for identifying the bird. It turned out to be the Black Bittern! This is the first time I am looking at one and the yellow stripes on black background looked stunning.

Black Bittern

Then I heard the "brain-fever" call and spotted the source – Common Hawk Cuckoo. This call followed me all along during the rest of the trip in Nepal.

Common Hawk Cuckoo

Pokhara (elevation 822 metres)

Looking at the airport terminal while landing, one can make out that this is an important city in Nepal. In fact, this is the second largest city and is considered the tourism capital of Nepal. All trekking routes in the Annapurna Range start from here. This is a clean, cosmopolitan city that caters to tourists pouring in from all over the world. You can buy or rent all kinds of trekking gear in case you missed bringing any items.

We stayed near the beautiful freshwater Phewa Lake. We walked around the Basundhura Park adjacent to the lake. It was windy and we could not do the boat ride. Besides the usual city birds, I could only spot the White-throated Kingfisher to add to my list.

White-throated Kingfisher

Next day, I could not do any birding in the morning as we had to leave early to reach the starting point of our trekking route. We drove in a jeep for about 50km until we crossed Ulleru, in the Myagdi district in Nepal. Our trekking trail was to start here.

Ghorapani (elevation 2874 metres)

This is a small village that lies in the trekking trail of Annapurna Base Camp and is a popular rest stop for trekkers. It derived its name based on the age-old practice wherein traders in ancient times used to stop here to water their horses. We had to trek 10km to reach Ghorapani. The climb was steep and the paths were winding in and around the mountains, occasionally abutting streams. The views were stunning. I spotted birds during the trek but could only recognize the Red-whiskered Bulbul and the Blue Whistling Thrush.

Blue Whistling Thrush

It was evening by the time we checked in to our lodge in Ghorapani. Because of the altitude, the temperature dropped significantly. I saw other trekkers huddled around the *angithi* (fire boiler) in the lobby of the lodge to warm themselves.

Pink-browed Rosefinch male

Pink-browed Rosefinch female

Carrion Crow

I stepped out briefly after checking in to take in the beautiful green surroundings with the snow-capped mountain range in the background. I spotted the Pink-browed Rosefinch, Carrion Crow, Russet Sparrow, and the Grey Bushchat in and around the lodge.

Russet Sparrow male

Russet Sparrow female

Grey Bushchat male

Grey Bushchat female

The next day we woke up around 4am in the morning to climb the nearby Poon Hill (elevation 3200 metres). A 4km trek round trip, with a steep climb of 400 metres – but it felt like we were climbing our way to heaven!

Later in the day, we trekked 3km to a nearby Rhododendron park. On the way back, I spotted the Stripe-throated Yuhina nestled among the branches.

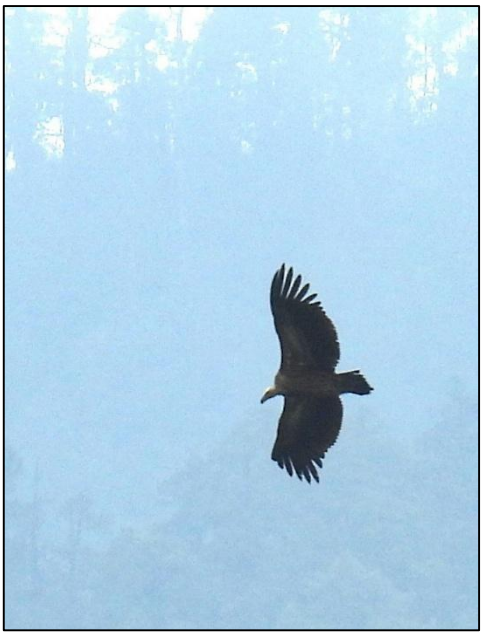
Stripe-throated Yuhina

Tadapani (elevation 2630 metres)

The trek from Ghorapani to Tadapani was about 12km. What made it excruciating is that first we need to climb down to an altitude of 1800 metres and then climb up again till 2600 metres. Effectively, we are climbing down 800 metres and then climbing up 800 meters, and neither the ascent nor the descent was gradual.

On the way to Tadapani, we had stopped for lunch at a lodge located at the edge of a mountain in the middle of nowhere. My wife wanted me to take her picture using her cellphone capturing the mountain landscape in the background. When I about to click her picture, a huge bird flew right behind her. It was a really huge bird – I thought my daughter could easily ride on it, like they show in the movie Avatar. It had big eyes, a bald head, and sprawling wings.

I had a brain freeze moment. Should I just drop the phone and run to get my camera so that I can take a picture? Or should I try to take a picture of the bird with the cellphone instead of my wife? Luckily sanity prevailed. I first dutifully took the picture of my wife, handed her the cellphone, ran towards my backpack, took out my Nikon camera and ran in the direction in which the bird flew. Although I was not able to take a clean picture, I was able to identify it – it was the Eurasian Griffon Vulture!



Eurasian Griffon

I was told that one can only reach Tadapani by foot. It is a cluster of lodges, or tea-houses as they call it locally. The extent to which the hospitality industry caters to the trekkers in Nepal is commendable. I feel they are ahead by at least 20 years when compared to India. You get Wi-Fi in the remotest of villages. The menu at these lodges are reviewed and vetted by the Nepal Tourism Department. You get pizza, pasta, chocolate pudding, Indian cuisine and Nepali cuisine in every lodge in the middle of nowhere. I was told that the mushroom pizza served by the tea-house at the Annapurna Base Camp is the best in Nepal! Our favorite was the vegetarian Nepali Thali, which is a good mix of carbohydrates, proteins, and fibre.

We were exhausted by the time we reached our lodge in Tadapani in the evening and after an early dinner, went to bed straight away. I woke up early the next morning to a distinctive bird call, which turned out to be the Grey-winged Blackbird.

Grey-winged Blackbird calling

Rufous-bellied Niltava

Verditer Flycatcher

Green-backed Tit

I sat on the bench outside our room. It was cold, around 4°C, but there was some sunshine. I spotted the Rufous-bellied Niltava, Verditer Flycatcher, Green-backed Tit, Rufous Sibia, Great Barbet, and the White Wagtail. Then, after breakfast, we headed towards Ghandruk.

Rufous Sibia

Great Barbet

White Wagtail

Siberian Stonechat

Ghandruk (elevation 2000 metres)
Our trek to Ghandruk from Tadapani was about 8km, and mostly downhill. By now we had got used to the trekking rhythm and enjoyed the greenery of the forest all the way. Ghandruk is a relatively large village and one can drive to this place as well. The snow-capped view of the Annapurna South Mountain, Hiunchuli Mountain, and the Fish Tail (Machhapuchhare) Mountain was amazing.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow

Oriental Turtle Dove

In the evening we took a stroll around the village to absorb the local life. We got to visit a local museum and my daughter tried out the local Gurung dress.

I spotted the Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Bank Myna, Oriental Turtle Dove, Dark-breasted Rosefinch, Siberian Stonechat, Pied Bushchat, and Hume's Leaf Warbler in and around the hotel during the walk.

Dark-breasted Rosefinch female

Hume's Leaf Warbler

The next day, we trekked further downhill for about 5km to Syuali where our jeep was waiting. We drove back to Pokhara and eventually made our way back home in one piece.

Before this trip, other than Kathmandu, I had absolutely zero knowledge about other places in Nepal. I found the people very friendly and supportive. Their hospitality eco-system, especially for trekkers, is highly evolved since their economy primarily depends on tourism. A few other lessons before I wrap up: it is lot cheaper to buy a local SIM card than carrying one from India. Indian currency is accepted everywhere and UPI payment works in most of the places. Instead of flying to Kathmandu, it may be lot more economical to fly to Gorakhpur and take a taxi to cross the border. I also learned that Chitwan National Park in Nepal is a birding paradise. I hope to visit Nepal again sometime soon.

The full list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	29	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*
2	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	30	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*
3	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	31	Crimson Sunbird	*Aethopyga siparaja*
4	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	32	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
5	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	33	Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*
6	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*	34	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*
7	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	35	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
8	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	36	Pink-browed Rosefinch	*Carpodacus rodochroa*
9	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*	37	Carrion Crow	*Corvus corone*
10	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	38	Russet Sparrow	*Passer rutilans*
11	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*	39	Grey Bushchat	*Saxicola ferreus*
12	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*	40	Stripe-throated Yuhina	*Yuhina gularis*
13	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	*Leiopicus mahrattensis*	41	Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus caeruleus*
14	Indian Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	42	Rufous-naped Tit	*Periparus rufonuchalis*
15	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	43	Eurasian Griffon	*Gyps fulvus*
16	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	44	Rufous-bellied Niltava	*Niltava sundara*
17	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	45	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*
18	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	46	Grey-winged Blackbird	*Turdus boulboul*
19	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*	47	Green-backed Tit	*Parus monticolus*
20	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*	48	Great Barbet	*Psilopogon virens*
21	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	49	Rufous Sibia	*Heterophasia capistrata*
22	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*	50	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	*Passer montanus*
23	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	51	Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*
24	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	52	Oriental Turtle Dove	*Streptopelia orientalis*
25	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	53	Dark-breasted Rosefinch	*Carpodacus nipalensis*
26	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*	54	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*
27	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	55	Hume's Leaf Warbler	*Phylloscopus humei*
28	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*			

Some other photographs taken during the trip:

Rufous-naped Tit

Spotted Owlet

Red-vented Bulbul

House Crow

Russet Sparrow male

* * *

PELAGIC BIRDING
Trip Report: Off the Coast of Mangaluru, Karnataka, November 16-17, 2024

Text and Photos: Aditya Rao

A view of the Mangaluru coast at sunset

Introduction

This report documents a two-day pelagic birding expedition off the coast of Mangaluru, Karnataka on November 16-17, 2024. The trip was thoughtfully organized by Shiva Shankar, Gopala, Dipu, and their team. Their years of experience in organizing such excursions were evident in the smooth execution of the journey.

Briefing by Gopi at the start of the trip

Pelagic birding is inherently challenging. The constant motion of the boat, risk of seasickness, harsh sunlight, exposure to the elements, and the sheer vastness of the ocean make it a demanding endeavour. Despite these difficulties, however, the team recorded several notable bird species typical of the post-monsoon migratory period.

Bridled Tern flock

Planning and Preparation

Preparation for a pelagic birding trip is essential to ensure safety and maximize birding success. Participants were advised to carry motion sickness tablets, sun protection gear, high-SPF sunscreen, binoculars, cameras with telephoto lenses, waterproof cases, and plenty of water (most food/drinking arrangements were fortunately taken care of). Since the pelagic environment can be unpredictable, having layered clothing for wind and heat protection proved crucial.

The organizers ensured that the trawler was equipped not just for transportation, but for extended birding hours. Comfortable shaded areas, rest cabins with air conditioning, sanitation facilities, and safety measures such as life jackets and communication equipment added to the reliability of the expedition. Refreshments and meals were provided on board, boosting morale and energy throughout the day.

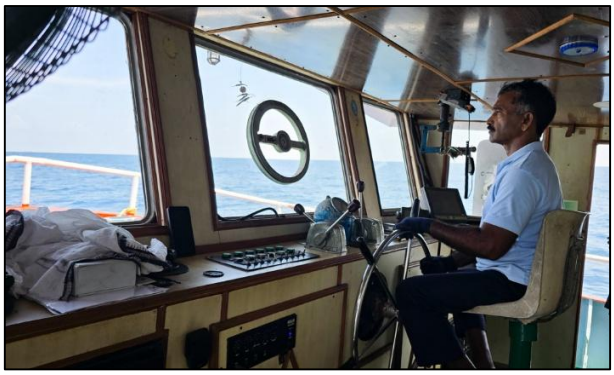
Trip Overview

The launch site was near the Old Port of Mangaluru.

The Old Port of Mangaluru

The trawler *Yojaka Atlantic* set out at 6:30AM each day, carrying us birders roughly 30 nautical miles into the open sea. These deep-sea waters are ideal for spotting pelagic species, which rarely come close to shore.

Aboard *Yojaka Atlantic*



Our captain on the ship

Although the early mornings were cool and calm, the sun intensified as the day progressed. Birders rotated between scanning the skies and sea for movement and resting indoors. The crew maintained an upbeat atmosphere with warm hospitality, which proved valuable during the long hours of scanning and waiting.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

While bird density is higher within 2 kilometres of the shore, sightings became sparse in deeper waters. Instead, birders were often greeted by massive commercial vessels and disheartening amounts of floating plastic waste. Interestingly, some seabirds were observed using this debris as resting platforms, a behaviour that previously relied on natural flotsam.

Flesh-footed Shearwater

Greater Crested Tern

Field Challenges and Birding Experience

Identifying birds in real time is often difficult at sea, requiring photographs for post-trip consultation with experts. While some species like the Masked Booby are unmistakable, others such as Skuas and Jaegers demand detailed analysis.

Masked Booby

The boat rocked continuously, making stable binocular viewing or photography difficult. Birders had to remain extremely alert – scanning, tracking, and focusing on fast-moving birds in a dynamic seascape. Moments of stillness were interrupted by sudden appearances of rare species, often offering mere seconds for observation before vanishing beyond reach.

Photographing seabirds from a swaying deck requires not only skill but also high shutter speeds and image stabilization. Even with top-notch equipment, the lighting conditions and salt-laden air proved challenging. Many of the birders resorted to burst-mode photography to increase the odds of capturing identifiable shots.

Pomarine Skua

Despite these obstacles, the sightings were rewarding. From graceful terns skimming the waves to majestic jaegers chasing smaller birds mid-air, the sea was alive with action – when it chose to reveal its secrets. Brief yet magical encounters made the long hours worthwhile.

The high seas, silent for hours, can bring their own peace

Ecological Observations and Reflections

Pelagic birding is more than a visual treat – it's a stark reminder of the environmental threats that marine ecosystems face. The team encountered considerable plastic debris floating in the ocean, including bottles, wrappers, and fishing nets. The presence of such non-biodegradable waste affects marine life significantly and also shapes the behaviour of seabirds.

Greater Crested Terns on log

Interestingly, birds like terns, jaegers and petrels were seen perching on floating waste. In earlier decades, driftwood or seaweed served this role, but increasing plastic pollution has changed this dynamic. These artificial rafts may aid temporary rest but also signal how deeply human patterns of consumption and behaviour have altered natural habitats.

Parasitic Jaeger (aka Arctic Skua) on plastic can

Pomarine Skua on thermocol

The absence of marine mammals on this trip was another indicator worth noting. While dolphins and whales have been spotted on similar outings in previous years, they remained elusive this time. Whether due to migratory patterns or disturbance from increased maritime activity was not clear.

Birding Community and Camaraderie

This trip brought together 12–14 passionate birders from across India. Some joined for one day, while others stayed for both. The shared experience of enduring oceanic challenges and marvelling at rare avifauna forged bonds among the group.

Birding at sea requires collaboration – spotting, identifying, and discussing in real-time. Participants helped each other track birds, share photographic data, and engage in lively discussions during breaks. Post-trip, many stayed connected to verify identifications and share their compiled observations.

Parasitic Jaeger (aka Arctic Skua)

The presence of experienced birders added great value. With experts like Dipu on board, several uncertain IDs were clarified using his in-depth knowledge of seabird morphology, behaviour, and migration. The trip also served as an educational opportunity for budding birders eager to learn about marine species.

Seasonal Species Overview (Based on Historical Data)

Skua and Jaegers (Stercorarius spp.):

- Long-tailed Skua: Aug–Oct
- Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua): Oct–Mar
- Pomarine Skua: Aug–Nov
- South Polar Skua: Rare, Sep
- Brown Skua: Sep–Oct

Storm-Petrels and Shearwaters:

- Wilson's Storm-Petrel: Jun–Oct (peak Aug)
- Jouanin's Petrel: May–Sep
- Flesh-footed Shearwater: Jul–Aug
- Persian Shearwater: Year-round, peak Jul–Oct

Terns:

- Bridled Tern: Apr–Nov (peak May–Sep)
- Sooty Tern: Apr–Oct (peak Jul–Aug)
- Great Crested Tern: Year-round (Mar–Nov prominent)
- Lesser Crested Tern: Mar–Oct
- Saunders’s Tern: Rare, Aug–Sep

Frigatebirds:

- Lesser Frigatebird: Jul–Sep
- Christmas Island Frigatebird: Rare, Aug

Boobies:

- Brown Booby: Aug–Sep
- Masked Booby: Rare, Jul–Aug

(Source: eBird.org data summaries)

Final Reflections

This expedition served as both a challenging adventure and a gentle call to appreciate our fragile ecosystems. From tracking elusive seabirds to witnessing the impact of marine pollution, every moment was a lesson in coexistence and conservation.

Whether you're a seasoned birder or a curious naturalist, pelagic birding off Mangaluru is an experience unlike any other. The memories of bobbing on the ocean, camera in hand, watching a Parasitic Jaeger cut through the sky, will linger long after the trip ends.

I would like to place on record my special thanks to Shiva (tour organizer), Gopala (our tour lead), Dipu (for helping with complex identifications), and the entire team for their outstanding coordination and hospitality. Looking forward to the next pelagic adventure!

The full list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Count	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Count
1	Parasitic Jaeger (Arctic Skua)	*Stercorarius parasiticus*	35	14	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	6
2	Pomarine Skua	*Stercorarius pomarinus*	23	15	Western Reef Heron	*Egretta gularis*	3
3	Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	1	16	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	2
4	Bridled Tern	*Onychoprion anaethetus*	14	17	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Ardea coromanda*	18
5	Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	1	18	Medium Egret	*Ardea intermedia*	1
6	Lesser Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bengalensis*	3	19	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	117
7	Greater Crested Tern	*Thalasseus bergii*	85	20	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*	60
8	Flesh-footed Shearwater	*Ardenna carneipes*	4	21	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*	10
9	Masked Booby	*Sula dactylatra*	2	22	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	38
10	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	4	23	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	2
11	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*	2	24	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*	14
12	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	4	25	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	4
13	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	17				

Some other photographs taken during the trip:

Flesh-footed Shearwater

Masked Booby

Parasitic Jaeger (aka Arctic Skua)

Pomarine Skua with fish

* * *

Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Crimson-backed Sunbird (*Leptocoma minima*)

Crimson-backed Sunbird male (L & C) and female (R) (Munnar, Kerala, October 2, 2017)

Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Nectariniidae
Genus:	*Leptocoma*
Species:	*L. minima*
Size:	8 cm
IUCN Status:	Least Concern

Description & distribution: The Crimson-backed Sunbird, earlier known as the Small Sunbird, is the smallest of the Sunbirds, and is endemic to the Western Ghats, from north Thane southwards till Kanyakumari. At 8cm, it is almost the same size as the Pale-billed Flowerpecker, generally considered as the smallest bird in India (although Salim Ali as well as Grimmett & Inskipp list both at 8cm). The adult male shows a shiny green head (crown), velvety red mantle, pinkish violet throat and rump. It has a broad, deep red breast 'bib' edged with black. Belly and vent are yellow. It is superficially similar to the Purple-rumped Sunbird, but the maroon on the upperparts of the Crimson-backed Sunbird is darker, and flanks and vent are whiter. In eclipse plumage, the male has more olive on the head, and the velvet-red is seen only on lower mantle and wing coverts. The female is olive brown, like the females of most Sunbirds, but the lower rump is clearly red. Eclipse male is differentiated from the female by the metallic purple rump.

Habitat & behaviour: The Crimson-backed Sunbird is usually seen singly or in pairs in any areas that have an abundance of flowering plants – usually at the edges of forests, gardens that have suitable nectar-bearing flowering plants, even around human habitation, and sholas in hilly evergreen biotope, normally between 300m and 2000m. While foraging or feeding on nectar, it tends to perch on a branch rather than hover in front of the flowers; besides, it may also consume insects. Like most Sunbirds, their flight is fast and undulating. The call are a short *chik* and a squeaky *see see whi see see siwee*, repeated frequently after short pauses.

Nesting: The Crimson-backed Sunbird is an endemic resident breeder in the Western Ghats of India. Peak nesting season is between December and April, although it has been known to breed at other times of the year also. Its nest is the usual Sunbird nest, a hanging pouch made of fibres, grass and moss, suspended from the tip of a twig, and most often on Strobilanth bushes. The usual clutch consists of 2 white eggs with a ring of reddish spots.

Local name: The Crimson-backed Sunbird is known as *'Chhota shaker khora'* in Hindi, '*Nano shakkarakhoro*' in Gujarati, and *'Cheru tenkili'* in Malayalam.

* * *

Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(Received on WhatsApp, February 19, 2024)

* * *

For information, write to: Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.in. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*